

HAWSR Foundation Organizational Structure of an NGO

This document was developed by **HAWSR Foundation** as a part of its outreach to the wider NGO understanding for Pakistan, the intended Operations & other countries

The wide variety and complexity working on different themes, at different levels, or targeting different audiences, make it extremely difficult to create a generic outline of an organizational structure. In general, a typical NGO's organizational structure is illustrated in **Figure 1**. Note that this organizational structure, or its adaptations, is in fact a part of the NGO's by-laws¹, and specific features and details are explicitly outlined in the by-laws.

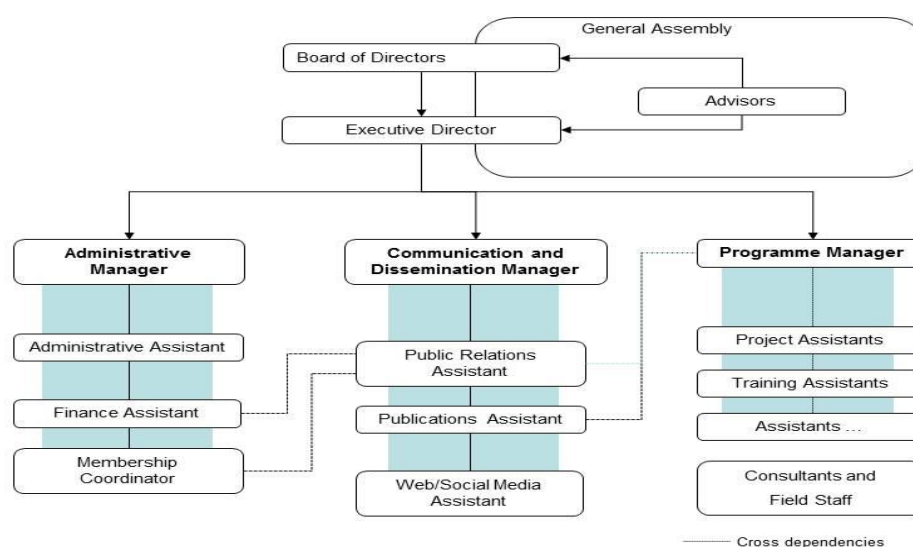


Figure 1: The **HAWSR Foundation** organizational structure **NGO**

Top Management:

The top management of an NGO consists of three entities - the Board of Directors, the General Assembly, and the Executive Director (See Figure 2).

1. At the top is the Board of Directors of the NGO. An NGO Board is a legal requirement in most countries in order to get it officially registered with the local authorities. Many NGOs stipulate that membership in a board is voluntary and non-remunerative². Board meetings are kept closed, though written proceedings, reports and minutes may be made public for transparency purposes. **HAWSR Foundation strives for Transparency**

HAWSR Foundation NGO, a Board may be responsible for a number of tasks, for example hire and supervise the Executive Director, develop and approve budgets, etc. Board members will also be expected to champion the NGO's cause, and represent the NGO to the larger community. **Many NGOs also expect board members to help raise fund for their projects³**. **HAWSR Foundation** is Independent and does not depend on any type of Monetary Funding at all.

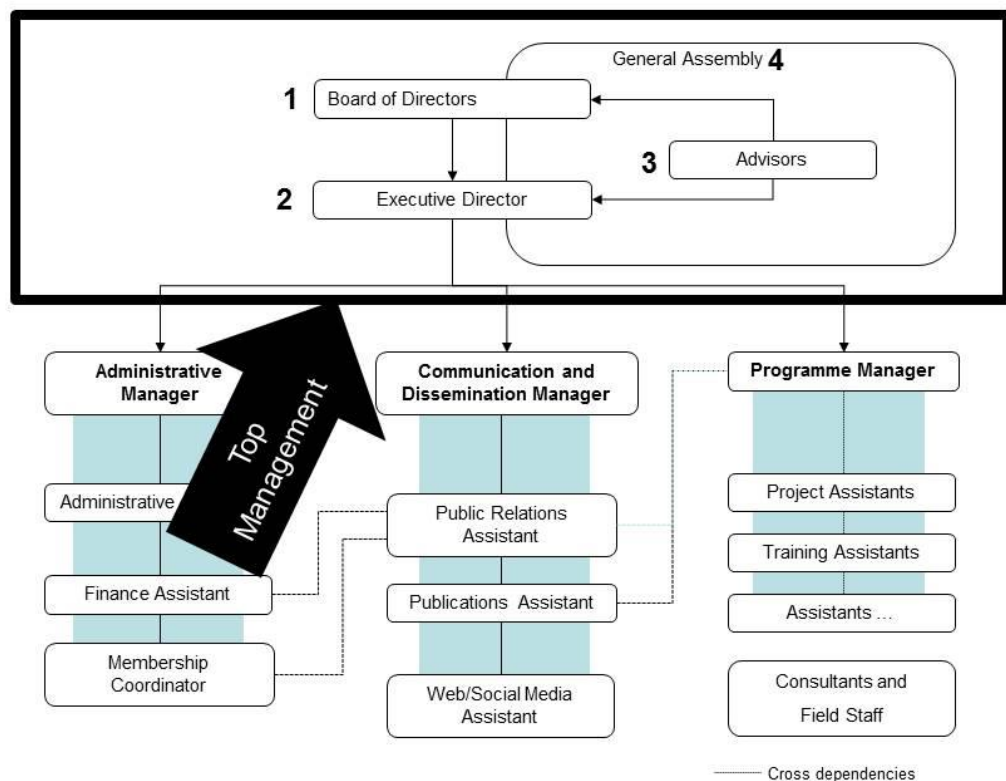


Figure 2: The block representing the NGO's top management

1. Next comes the Executive Director, who may also be called by other names such as Coordinator, Chief Operating Officer, or CEO. He or she will be responsible for the overall direction in which the NGO moves, and the responsibility for managing the day-to-day activities of the NGO. The Executive Director is also member of the board - usually its Executive Secretary. He or she reports to the Board.
2. The Board of Directors and the Executive Director will be assisted by advisors. These advisors are optional, but are useful to create a good image of the NGO, and enhance its "brand name" besides providing specialist advice for the NGO.
3. In some cases, a General Assembly may be set up at this level. Especially in cases where the NGO is a membership-based NGO, the General Assembly is a group of all such members, including its board members and staff members. The General Assembly usually meets annually or biannually or quarterly and is held sequential to a Board Meeting.

While day-to-day decisions activities and management are taken care of by the board, the executive director and the staff members, the highest body that guides and advises the overall development and progress of the NGO is the General Assembly. A general assembly may or may not be required by law (and not all NGOs have a general assembly), but such a body helps in creating a good transparent image for the NGO, in building trust with its partners and stakeholders, and in public relations and activities.

Depending on the NGO's by-laws, members of the General Assembly can also participate in the meetings by proxy, usually deferring to the Executive Director to cast their vote when needed.

Staff Members

Staff members of an NGO are responsible for the day-to-day functioning, and implementing of its programmes and projects. They report to the Executive Director, who overall is responsible for the NGO's activities. (See Figure 3) Staff members of an NGO fall into three groups - responsible for activities related to (1) administration, (2) publicity and (3) programmes/projects.

1. Administrative activities are led by an administrative manager. This manager may have several staff members assisting him/her, including a Finance Assistant or a Membership Coordinator. Besides the financial management of an NGO, a Finance Assistant may also be responsible for activities of the NGO. This means that he/she will have to work closely with the staff members responsible for communications and dissemination, as well as those responsible for programmes/projects. In the case of larger NGOs, this responsibility may fall under a separate position specifically set up for the purpose. The membership coordinator manages the NGO's members, members (on Payroll & Voluntary) customer relations etc.

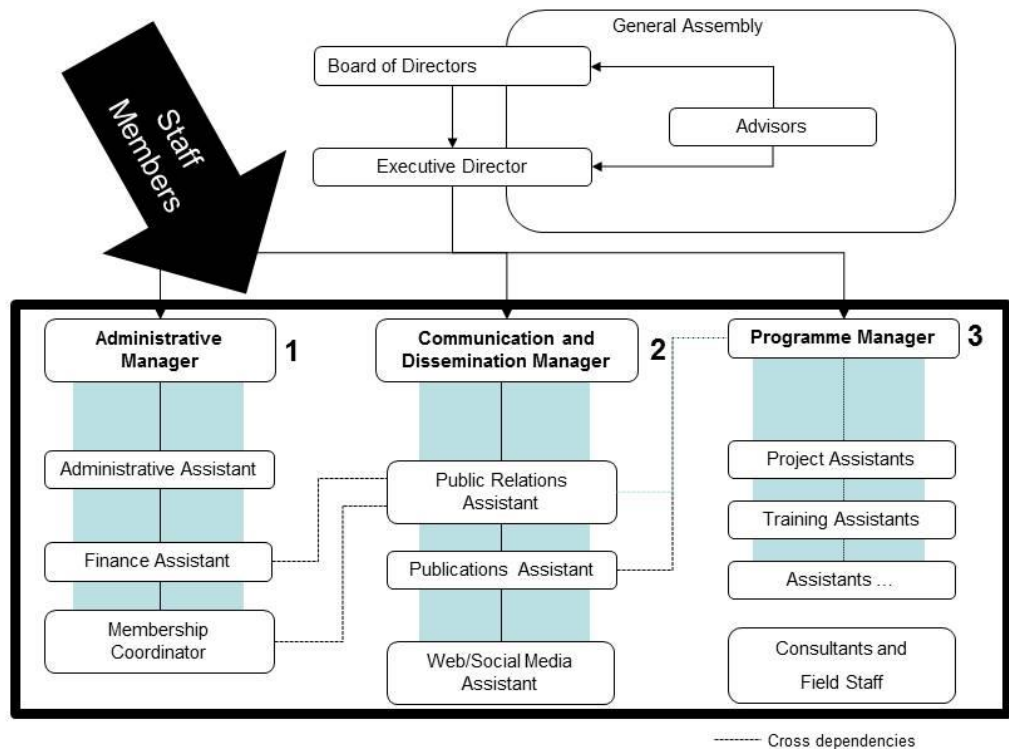


Figure 3: The block representing staff members of the NGO

2. Communications and dissemination activities are the responsibility of a staff member at the level of a manager. This manager may be assisted by other staff members such as a Public Relations Assistant, a Publications Assistant, or a Web/Social Media Assistant. The Public Relations assistant works closely with both the Finance Assistant and Membership Coordinator on one hand, and the Programme Manager on the other, to publicize its activities and build a "brand name" for the NGO. Similarly, the publications assistant will have to work with the public relations and web/social media assistant in order to make sure the NGO'S publications are disseminated widely and in a timely manner.
3. Programme and project activities of an NGO are led by a manager. This is, of course, the biggest part of an NGO's activities, and forms its structural core. A Programme Manager may be assisted by several Project Assistants, Training Assistants, and other Assistants, depending on the number and size of the projects being implemented. Short-term external consultants, who provide specific services for projects, or field staff who are hired to implement projects in the target community, also fall under this section.

The staff positions and responsibilities outlined above are not, of course, fixed. NGOs can have other staff members too, or shared/related responsibilities can be held by one person. For example, related responsibilities of Membership Coordination and Public Relations can be handled by the same staff member. In cases where an NGO is just starting, or in the process of developing, this consolidation will particularly be true, where one staff member may be handling more than one and related responsibilities.

Details of all staff members, their roles and responsibilities, and overall NGO structure are concretized by including them in the NGO's by-laws. By-laws are needed for the legal registration of an NGO, and can be added to, or changed, with the approval of the Board of Directors and the General Assembly. The organizational structure itself may change over time, depending on how the programmes and projects are and new ones initiated.

- 1 The spellings of both terms 'by-laws' and 'bye-laws' are correct, and both are widely accepted and used worldwide. They essentially mean the same - rules of procedure made by an organization for the regulation, administration or management of its organizational structure and operational activities. They usually deal with matters of internal regulation, and are binding on all persons within the organization. While both spellings are acceptable, for the sake of consistency, 'by-laws' is used in this document.
- 2 This is done to avoid conflict-of-interest or vested interests.
- 3 As with all aspects mentioned in this document, the tasks, responsibilities, hiring procedures, and other details of every staff member, including its board and executives, are laid out in the NGO's by-laws by **HAWSR Foundation**

For and on behalf of **HAWSR Foundation**

Chief Executive International Operations & Planning